



**Testimony
Rudy Marconi
First Selectman, Town of Ridgefield
President, Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Planning & Development Committee
March 20, 2019**

RE: HB-7192, AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND EFFICIENCIES

Sen. Cassano, Rep. McCarthy-Vahey, Sen. Champagne and Rep. Zawistowski, my name is Rudy Marconi, First Selectman of the Town of Ridgefield and President of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST), which represents 110 smaller communities throughout Connecticut.

I would like to comment on the HB-7192, introduced by Governor Ned Lamont to facilitate regional approaches to the delivery of local services. Before I begin to address the particulars of the bill, on behalf of COST, I would like to express my gratitude to the governor and his staff for their willingness to meet and discuss these proposals in detail. The governor is committed to an open, honest dialogue about the issues and it is much appreciated.

Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations

COST supports efforts to facilitate shared service/regional approaches that are demonstrated to produce savings and/or enhance the delivery of local services. As such, we support Section 2 of the bill which enhances the mission and composition of the Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) to focus on researching and promoting regional opportunities and efficiencies. We believe it is vitally important that ACIR work in conjunction with the Councils of Government (COGs), which do an outstanding job in supporting voluntary regionalization of a wide range of programs and services and will consider their position on these provisions.

We also appreciate that COST has appointments to ACIR and will strive to fill those appointments with representatives who are committed to engaging in a robust, productive discussion regarding shared service/regional approaches that will benefit municipalities and local property taxpayers.

Councils of Government – Funding

The regional Councils of Government must have adequate funding in order to continue to support shared service/regional service delivery approaches. COST supports efforts to ensure that funding is maintained at current levels.



Commission on Shared School Services

COST testified in strong opposition to the provisions in SB-874, which charged the Commission on Shared School Services with developing a plan for the redistricting and consolidation of school districts. We have met with OPM and the governor's staff to discuss these concerns and are very encouraged that these provisions will be revised to focus on opportunities to facilitate shared service/regional approaches to the delivery of education in ways that will save money and/or enhance the quality of education.

Regional Assessment Division

It is our understanding that there has been a lot of discussion regarding the provisions in the bill establishing a regional assessment division within each COG. We share concerns that have been raised by the assessors and COGs regarding how these changes will reduce costs and affect the delivery of services. We stand ready to work with the governor's office and lawmakers to address these concerns.

Revaluation Zones

We appreciate that there has been much discussion about the provisions in the bill establishing five geographic revaluation zones. Again, COST shares the concerns raised by COGs and others regarding these provisions and look forward to working with the governor's office and lawmakers to address these concerns.

Public Safety Answering Points

COST has submitted testimony specific to the provisions in the bill regarding the consolidation of Public Safety Answering Points. COST recognizes that the consolidation of PSAPs is needed to achieve greater efficiency and cost savings. As such, we have supported efforts to promote the consolidation of PSAPs, including providing incentives for PSAPs to consolidate and, more importantly, addressing barriers that undermine consolidation efforts. We are therefore request that provisions in Section 23(d) which penalize municipalities that fail to consolidate be replaced with language that will facilitate the consolidation of PSAPs by addressing barriers and providing incentives.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the bill.

Founded in 1975, COST is the state's only organization dedicated exclusively to advocating on behalf of the interests of Connecticut's smaller towns in the legislative process.